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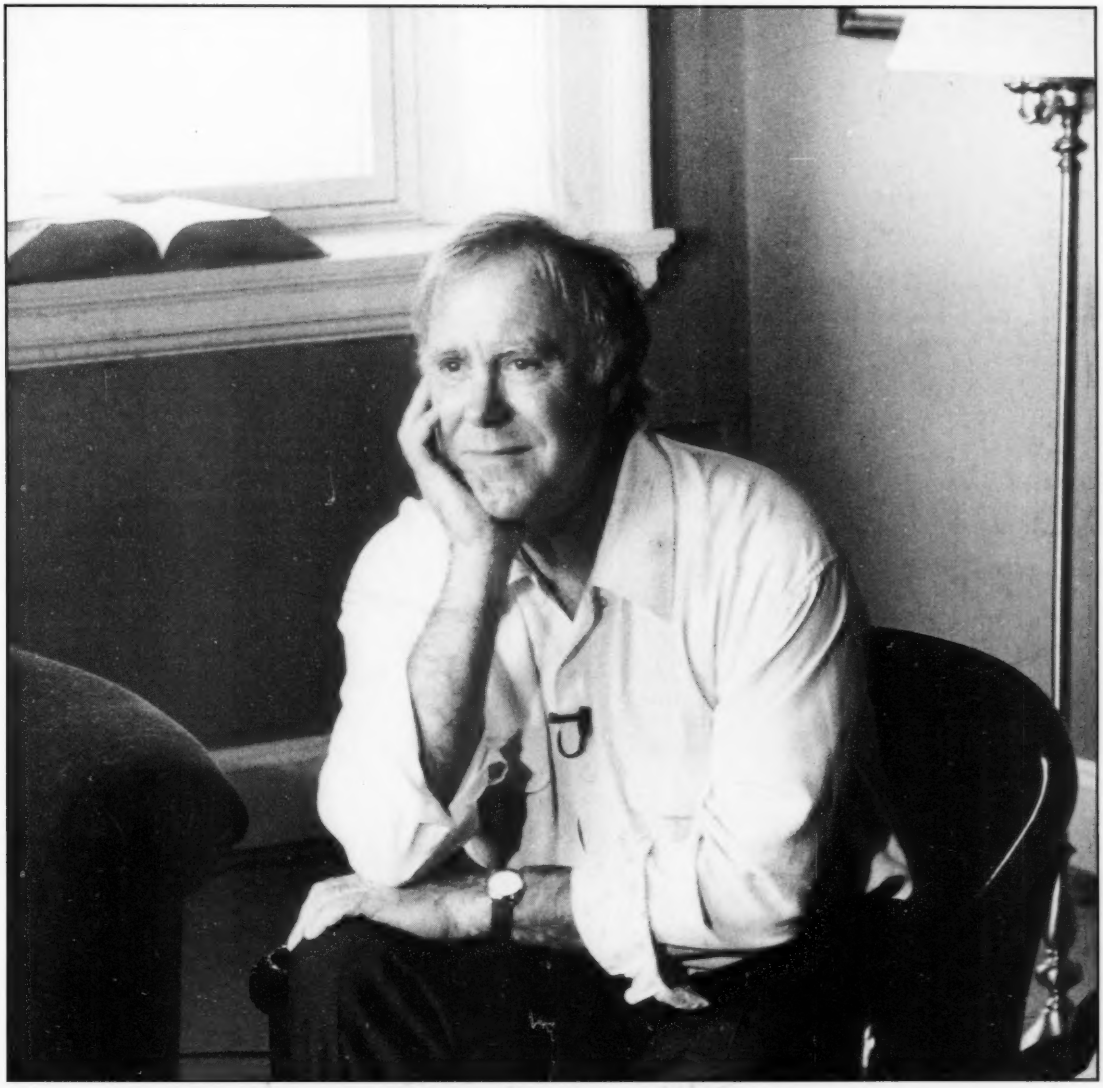

Robert Hass Gives His First Reading as Poet Laureate

Library of Congress

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Vol. 54, No. 20
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JAMES H. BILLINGTON
Librarian of Congress

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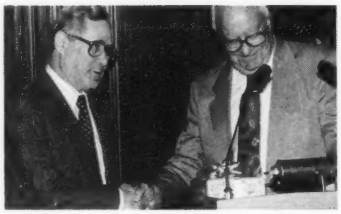

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GUY LAMOLINARA, Editor
MALINDA B. NEALE, PEGGY F. PIXLEY
Printing Management Section
JOHN J. KOZAR, Publisher

Prints and Photographs Division

"Silent Cal": He defined the limitations of government at a time when his contemporaries pursued state power.

'Silent Cal' Revisited:

New Perspectives on the 1920s Offered at Symposium

The often underestimated "Silent Cal," better known as President Calvin Coolidge, was the subject of a recent symposium held at the Library.

The Oct. 5–7 symposium looked at the political, economic, social and cultural history of the 1920s. "Calvin Coolidge and the Coolidge Era" was made possible by the generosity of Madison Council member Laurance S. Rockefeller.

Noted British historian Paul Johnson's talk, "Calvin Coolidge and the Last Arcadia," helped refocus consideration of a president often fondly underestimated as "Silent Cal." Mr. Johnson's talk placed Coolidge's "minimalist" style of governing in the context of his contemporaries.

"Of those who came to power at the same time as Coolidge, all the most notable were dedicated to expanding the role of the state. Mussolini, supreme in Italy from 1922 . . . Stalin, in power from 1923 . . . Kemal Ataturk, president of Turkey from 1923, Chiang Kai-shek, ruler of China from 1925, Ibn Saud of Saudi Arabia (1926) and Reza Shah of Persia (1925)," said Mr. Johnson.

"No one in the 20th century defined more elegantly the limitations

Jim Higgins

John Haynes: "Historical scholarship has tended to leave the 1920s in the shadows."

of government and the need for individual endeavor, which necessarily involves inequalities, to advance human happiness," he said.

A noted commentator and essayist on history, culture and politics in print, radio and television journalism, Mr. Johnson has also served as editor of such respected British journals as *The New Statesman* and *The Spectator*. Among Mr. Johnson's works are *A History of Christianity* (1976), *Modern Times: The World from the Twenties to the Eighties* (1983) and *The Birth of the Modern: World Society, 1815–1830* (1991). He will soon publish a book on man's relation to God, to be followed by a history of the American nation, which will join his already published histories of the people of England, Ireland and Egypt.

The keynote address was preceded by a dinner during which actor Jim Cooke performed selections from his one-man show, "Calvin Coolidge: More than Two Words."

According to symposium architect John Haynes, the Manuscript Division specialist in 20th century political history, "mainstream historical understanding of the 1920s has tended to understate the tremendous economic, technological and cultural dynamism of this decade, and . . . historical scholarship has tended to leave the 1920s in the shadows, as attention has focused either earlier, on the calamity of World War I, or later, on the travail of the Great Depression of the 1930s."

For three days, six panels and three special events helped fill in the historical record. Participating historians presented insights into changing perspectives on the 1920s; Coolidge as man and as president; Coolidge's enigmatic relationship to his commerce secretary, Herbert Hoover; new conclusions on economic growth and income levels during the 1920s; and American foreign policy.

Three panels on American society and culture ranged from talks on women's suffrage and movie morality to such topics as "Mass Culture and the Americanization of Working Class Ethnics in the Coolidge Era" and "White Protestant Nation: The Birth of Modern Right-Wing Populism during the 1920s."

Symposium panelists represented a mix of senior and junior scholars. Participants included Michael Bernstein (University of California, San Diego), Kathleen M. Blee (University of Kentucky), John Braeman (University of Nebraska), Thomas Buckley (University of Tulsa), Warren I. Cohen (University of Maryland, Baltimore Campus), Lynn Dumenil (Occidental College), Ronald Edsforth (Dartmouth College), Paula S. Fass (University of California, Berkeley), Robert H. Ferrell (Emeritus, Indiana University), Burton Folsom (Mackinac Center for Public Policy, Midland, Mich.), Michael J. Hogan (Ohio State University), Dan Leab (Seton Hall University), Nancy MacLean (Northwestern University), Lary May (University of Minnesota), Leonard J. Moore (McGill University), George Nash (an independent scholar), Michael Parrish (University of California, San Diego), Elisabeth I. Perry (Sarah Lawrence College), Michael Platt (University of Wyoming, Casper), Stephen Schuker (University of Virginia), Thomas Silver (an independent scholar), Gene Smiley (Marquette University), Peter Temin (Massachusetts Institute of Technology) and Robert Zeiger (University of Florida).

The second night of the symposium featured the screening of a work in progress Coolidge documentary, also made possible by Mr. and Mrs. Rockefeller. Filmmaker and producer John Karol of Orford, N.H., invited comments and suggestions

Jim Higgins

Paul Johnson: "Of those who came to power at the time of Coolidge, all the most notable were dedicated to expanding the role of the state."

from the audience that he plans to use in completing the editing of the two-hour film.

The last day of the symposium included a demonstration in the Digital Library Visitors' Center of "The Coolidge Era and the Consumer Economy, 1921–29." The Library plans to make this electronic collection available on the Internet in 1996.

American Memory Program Coordinator Carl Fleischhauer and senior researcher Carren Kaston previewed a Coolidge speech on advertising preserved in the papers of Everett Sanders, the president's private secretary, which concludes:

"Advertising ministers to the spiritual side of trade"; and a case file called "Advertising Exploitation" from Calvin Coolidge's own papers, which gives a sense of business during the '20s. The case file includes a letter sent to the White House by a clothier requesting permission to name an overcoat "The Coolidge."

Permission was denied.

—*Carren Kaston*

Carren Kaston is working on assignment in the Manuscript Division.

The Library plans to publish, in both printed and electronic formats, the talks given by panelists and commentators at the Coolidge Era Symposium. Interested parties should contact John Haynes at (202) 707–5383, to add their names to the mailing list.

Library of Congress Membership Available: *Includes Subscription to* Civilization *Magazine*

Associate membership in the Library of Congress, which includes six issues of *Civilization*, is available for annual dues of $20 (see LC *Information Bulletin*, May 2, 1994).

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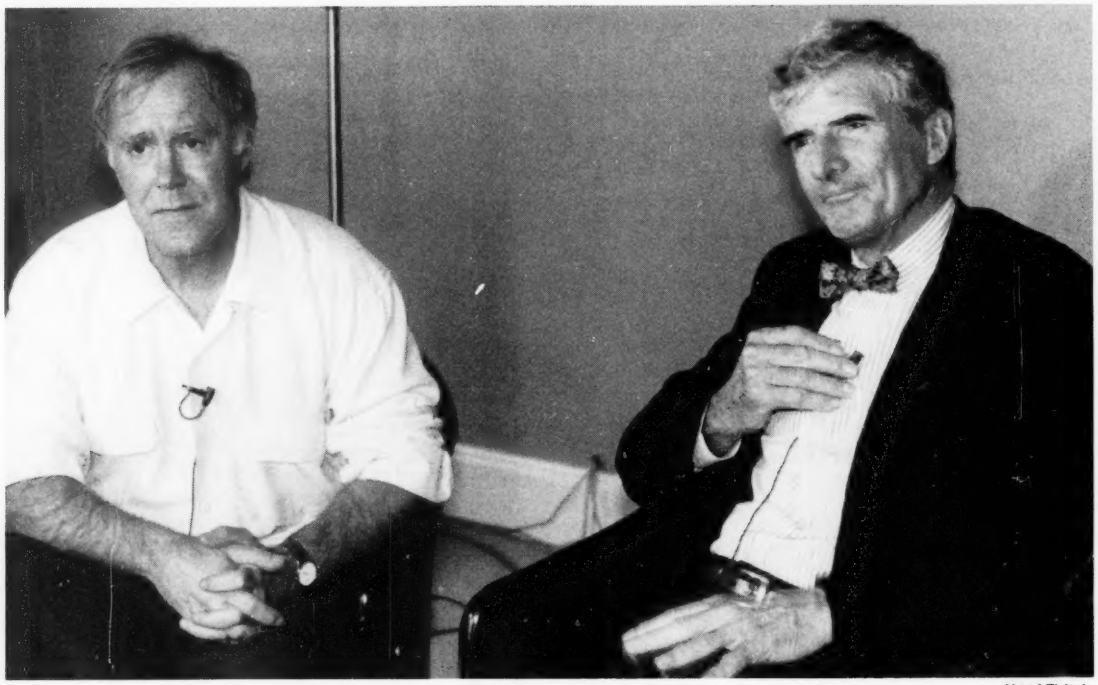
Information Bulletin 84LC01

LC Welcomes Guests From Ukraine

Lidia Marchuk (center), wife of Ukrainian Prime Minister Yevhen Marchuk, visited the Library Sept. 27 to tour restored areas of the Jefferson Building and view Library materials relating to her homeland. She was accompanied by Maria Shcherbak, wife of the Ukrainian ambassador to the United States. During their stay, Jurij Dobczansky, a senior cataloger in Central and East European languages, showed the guests a 1581 Bible, published in Ukraine, and a first edition (1860) of a work by Taras Shevchenko, whom many call Ukraine's finest poet. Ronald Grim, head of the Geography and Map Division reading room, spoke about a 1732 map of Ukraine, one of the earliest printed in English. The visitors were greeted by Dr. Billington and David Kraus, assistant chief of the European Division.

Yusef El-Amin



Yusef El-Amin

Prosser Gifford, director of Scholarly Programs, fielded questions during a news conference with the new Poet Laureate (left).

California on His Mind:

First Poet Laureate from the West Reads at LC

by Yvonne French

Robert Hass, the new Poet Laureate Consultant in Poetry, likes to talk about swimming and California zinfandel and women's stomachs in his poems (see page 452). The first two also make their way into his lectures.

Mr. Hass, a native of San Francisco and a professor of English at the University of California at Berkeley, also likes to talk about narcissism: "Self love is the one stalk of every human blossom," he read from one of his poems in the first of two readings he will give at the Library during the 1995–1996 literary season, which he opened Oct. 12.

Mr. Hass, the eighth Poet Laureate and the first from a western state, is the author of several books of poems, including *Field Guide, Praise,* and *Human Wishes,* and a collection of essays, *Twentieth Century Pleasures.*

"He is a master of the image, and images of California figure prominently in his work," said Prosser Gifford, director of scholarly programs for the Library, in introducing Mr. Hass (rhymes with mass) to the audience of 250 people, from elderly patrons, some of whom have attended the Library's poetry readings since they began in the 1940s, to a flock of college students, some of whom looked like they were members of angst-ridden garage bands.

As Mr. Hass continued reading, it became clear that he is more than just a California dreamer. He has the true poet's burden: He feels the pain of the world.

For example, one poem he read was about his "friend's story about the time he tried to kill himself. His girl had left him. Bees in the heart, then scorpions, then maggots and then ash. . . . I have the idea that the world's so full of pain that it makes a kind of singing."

During the 1½-hour reading, Mr. Hass described his love of translation of both the haiku master Matsuo

Bashō and the Polish poet Czeslaw Milosz.

Bashō wrote in the late 17th century and was the most simple of the poets Mr. Hass translated in his latest book, *The Essential Haiku: Versions of Bashō, Buson & Issa* (Ecco Press: 1994, $15). He shared some of Bashō's subtlety in the three-line, allusion-rich poems.

Mr. Hass explained that the following poem was written in *hiragana*, one of the three Japanese alphabets, except for the word "road," which was in *kanji*, and was therefore the same as the Chinese word for Tao, literally, "the way."

This road–
no one goes down it,
autumn evening.

He also read:

The oak tree:
not interested
in cherry blossoms.

Then Mr. Hass subtly made his own haiku verse. "It made me so happy, doing these poems. I can't tell you." He moved so smoothly from addressing the audience to recitation that it was unclear whether this haiku was composed extemporaneously or simply part of his talk.

He continued: "I would come home, go for a swim or whatever I do at the end of the day and look up the characters I didn't understand. I would get out the dictionary, and slowly this thing would emerge, and I would get in touch with this man at a hermitage."

Mr. Hass doesn't know Japanese and did not know Polish when he began translating Mr. Milosz's poems. However, he appreciated them on many levels, he said, perhaps because of similarities the poets share. Mr. Milosz and Mr. Hass are both realists, both write in free verse and neither is a formalist, he said. They also live six blocks from each other in Berkeley, and were both brought up in the Roman Catholic Church.

Said Mr. Hass: "We were having dinner sitting in a bar drinking white California wine and we realized we were altar boys. . . . We had this same . . . prayerful language of praise and supplication. The Catholic church is magical and polytheistic. . . . My cousin even prays to the carburetor god. One model for poetry is that each poem was a temple to a different god. 'Hail mother of mercy' could be a song to the muse."

Yusef El-Amin

Looking out on the Washington Mall from the Jefferson Building. Of Washingtonians, he says, they trade in access to power, and "people who have it are harried and always in motion."

Mr. Hass has translated several volumes of Mr. Milosz's poems, including *The Collected Poems, Unattainable Earth, Provinces* and *Facing the River.*

About halfway through the reading Mr. Hass couldn't find the poem by Mr. Milosz that he had wanted to read and so recited it from memory.

"He says that if it turns out that this world is just the world and that's it and everyone dies and that's it, and a sparrow is just a sparrow and it doesn't stand for anything and all these people who've been praying, wearing out their knees for centuries and centuries are wrong and there's nothing afterward, there's going to be something afterward. Because there's going to be one soul tearing into the void, screaming, howling, protesting," recalled Mr. Hass.

Then he found the page.

"His version is much more subtle. I said there was going to be one soul out there screaming. Listen to what he says: 'Even if that is so there will remain a word, wakened by lips that perish, a tireless messenger who runs and runs through interstellar fields in the revolving galaxy and screams, howls, protests.' I agonized for months over the order of 'screams,' 'howls' and 'protests.' If anyone has a better idea, please write to me care of the Library of Congress."

Until he accepted the post of Poet Laureate, Mr. Hass had been dividing his time between Berkeley and the town of Inverness on the Point Reyes peninsula, where it is said that the most exciting daily event is the fog burning off around noon. Mr. Hass is the father of three children and the stepfather of one. He is married to the poet Brenda Hillman, who teaches at St. Mary's College in California.

Mr. Hass got his B.A. in 1963 at St. Mary's and his M.A. in 1965 and Ph.D. in 1974 at Stanford University. He was an assistant professor from 1967 to 1971 at State University of New York in Buffalo, which, according to the Oct. 8 *San Jose Mercury News*, was then a haven for the beat poets.

"It was hugely fun. There were great parties," Mr. Hass told a reporter for the newspaper. He then became an associate and soon a full professor at St. Mary's and went to Berkeley, where he has been a professor since 1989.

Asked for his impression of Washington at a news conference, held the day after the reading in the

(Cont. on p. 453)

'The Beginning of September'

by Robert Hass

I

The child is looking in the mirror.
His head falls to one side, his shoulders
slump.
He is practicing sadness.

II

He didn't think she ought to
and she thought she should.

III

In the summer
peaches the color of sunrise

In the fall
plums the color of dusk

IV

Each thing moves its own way
in the wind. Bamboo flickers,
the plum tree waves, and the loquat
is shaken.

V

The dangers are everywhere. Auxiliary verbs, fishbones, a fine carelessness. No one really likes the odor of geraniums, not the woman who dreams of sunlight and is always late for work nor the man who would be happy in altered circumstances. Words are abstract, but *words are abstract* is a dance, car crash, heart's delight. It's the design dumb hunger has upon the world. Nothing is severed on hot mornings when the deer nibble the flowerheads in a simmer of bay leaves. Somewhere in the summer dusk is the sound of children setting the table. That is mastery: spoon, knife, folded napkin, fork; glasses all around. The place for the plate is wholly imagined. Mother sits here and father sits there and this is your place and this is mine. A good story compels you like sexual hunger but the pace is more leisurely. And there are always melons.

VI

little mother
little dragonfly quickness of summer
mornings
this is a prayer
this is the body dressed in its own warmth
at the change of seasons

VII

There are not always melons
There are always stories

VIII

Chester found a dozen copies of his first novel in a used bookstore and took them to the counter. The owner said, "You can't have them all," so Chester kept five. The owner said, "That'll be a hundred and twelve dollars." Chester said, "What?" and the guy said, "They're first editions, mac, twenty bucks apiece." And so Chester said, "Why are you charging me a hundred and twelve dollars?" The guy said, "Three of them are autographed." Chester said, "Look, I wrote this book." The guy said, "All right, a hundred, I won't charge you for the autographs."

IX

The insides of peaches
are the color of sunrise

The outsides of plums
are the color of dusk

X

Here are some things to pray to in San Francisco: the bay, the mountain, the goddess of the city; remembering, forgetting, sudden pleasure, loss; sunrise and sunset; salt; the tutelary gods of Chinese, Japanese, Basque, French, Italian and Mexican cooking; the solitude of coffee houses and museums; the virgin, mother and widow moons; hilliness, vistas; John McLaren; Saint Francis; the Mother of Sorrows; the rhythm of any life still whole through three generations; wine, especially zinfandel because from that Hungarian vine-slip came first a native wine not resinous and sugar-heavy; the sourdough mother, true yeast and beginning; all fish and fishermen at the turning of the tide; the turning of the tide; eelgrass, oldest inhabitant; fog; seagulls; Joseph Worcester; plum blossoms; warm days in January . . .(sic)

XI

She thought it was a good idea.
He had his doubts.

XII

ripe blackberries

XIII

She said: reside, reside
and he said, gored heart
She said: sunlight, cypress
he said, idiot children
nibbling arsenic in flaking paint
she said: a small pool of semen
translucent on my belly
he said maybe he said
maybe

XIV

the sayings of my grandmother:
they're the kind of people
who let blackberries rot on the vine

XV

The child approaches the mirror very fast
then stops
and watches himself
gravely.

XVI

So summer gives over–
white to the color of straw
dove gray to slate blue
burnishings
a little rain
a little light on the water

California *(Cont. from p. 451)*
recently renovated Poetry Office, located in the attic of the Jefferson Building, Mr. Hass said he was riding the subway when he overheard a conversation between two men "dressed in expensive, muted gray suits. One said to the other, 'When he was focused, he wouldn't even have dreamed of considering that.'" Mr. Hass said he didn't know what they were talking about, but got the idea that Washingtonians trade in access to power, and "people who have it are harried and always in motion."

Mr. Hass likes to incorporate bits of overheard conversations in his poems. He was in the produce section in a California market when he heard two women talking. One said to the other, "'He didn't think she ought to and she thought she should.' I didn't know what they were talking about but thought that was the poem I wanted to write," he said at the reading. The conversation made its way into "The Beginning of September" (see page 452), a poem of fragments and impressions in *Praise* (Ecco Press: 1979, $11).

Mr. Hass, 54, explained at the news conference that when he was younger, he wrote a lot of poetry about the natural world in short, descriptive lines. "I was the quintessential American male—I'll tell you what I'm seeing and you tell me what I'm feeling. The men in my family answered questions with 'yup' and 'nope.'"

Later he adopted a longer line. He has a habit of "sketching" long lines in the air, as if writing quickly, his pinky raised. "A longer line is more breath for me. It's also a matter of growing up, an accumulation of karma, the stuff that can't be fixed. It's deeply mysterious."

In recent years, Mr. Hass had explained at the poetry reading, he has been writing about pain by way of middle age and ruin. He recited the next, unpublished poem, "Forty Something" from memory, with the

"If nobody stood up and said that the life of the imagination in this country matters, it would be a shame."

disclaimer that it is neither about him, nor is it something his wife said to him. "I have an imagination, I can think like other people," he said.

"She says to him, musing, 'If you ever leave me, and marry a younger woman and have another baby, I'll put a knife in your heart.' They are in bed, so she climbs onto his chest, and looks directly down into his eyes. 'You understand? Your heart.'"

When he finished, laughter slowly filled the Montpelier Room.

The last poem he read, "Shame, an Aria," was about a man picking his nose in an elevator and how he feels when everybody looks at him. Essentially a meditation on why we are taught that bodily fluids are nasty, he went into each one in detail, and intoned that "the core of the self is where shame lives," before hopping down off the stage and being shuffled off surrounded by family and friends to a reception in the Mumford Room, where it took two hours for him to sign books for readers and well wishers.

The day after the reading Mr. Hass was feted at a luncheon during which Dr. Billington asked him to discuss his translations.

Afterward, Mr. Hass said that he accepted the post of Poet Laureate to be an advocate for American writing. "If nobody stood up and said that the life of the imagination in this country matters, it would be a shame."

He had said at the reading it was "an honor to be here in this place in this circumstance. . . . What we lobby for is the mind and the heart. They're not at all in danger in this country, but I think the country is in danger in relation to them." His comment, which came early in the reading, was greeted with immediate and loud clapping.

He elaborated at a news conference, which was taped by C-SPAN. "American poetry is at a state of tremendous vitality. . . . Three books of poetry are published a day; there are 400 poetry journals on the Internet. . . . Whole areas—Native American, Chinese, Asian, African American, Latino—that have been mute, who have gotten their world spoken for them by others, are writing." He mentioned rap by way of example and added, "A lot of poetry is being recited in bookstores and coffeehouses. Every time the politics get really bad, the poetry gets really good," he said.

"I think it has to do with the demoralization of what people perceive as the shrinking of the American economy. . . . One economic trend everyone agrees to in the country is the consolidation of wealth and the increase of poverty. The arts get active when reality needs realigning."

He also weighed in on violence. "The one thing we've succeeded at in this country is these ballet-like violent films. They're our best export except for weapons. Why are we so good at it? I was raised on it." He grabbed his heart and leaned sharply sideways. "You know, and you fall into a ravine. . . . Think of the cop who sets the world straight and then he's not included in it. . . . The climax is violent and the individual is isolated and not connected to families and communities. It is a purging

violence, and loneliness comes out of it. . . . I could think of things I'd rather have a culture be famous for."

Robert Hass may be in a position to see his ideal cultural milieu take shape as the leading advocate for American writing for one year, for which he will receive a stipend of $35,000. Although his official responsibilities are kept to a minimum, Mr. Hass said he has a few ideas. He wants to hold a weeklong conference in the spring on bioregionalism and environmental values in the United States.

He also wants to raise enough money to make the jazz and poetry reading initiated by his predecessor, Rita Dove, into an annual event for at least 10 years.

He also said he would work to syndicate poets and put their work back into newspapers. "We need to give the richness of our language and the richness of our culture back to the people. What gives language depth is common quotation," he said.

Mr. Hass would also like the Poetry and Literature Office at the Library of Congress to raise money to endow an award, "a medal perhaps," he said, for people who publish, edit, review and criticize poetry.

"We need to give the richness of our language and the richness of our culture back to the people."

Mr. Hass has received a few awards himself, including the Yale Younger Poets Award, the William Carlos Williams Award, the National Book Critics Circle Award for criticism in 1984, an award of merit from the American Academy of Arts and Letters, the Guggenheim Fellowship and a John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Fellowship.

Since his May appointment by the Librarian, who worked with Ms. Dove to choose a successor, Mr. Hass has received a half dozen calls to act as an advocate for causes both literary and nonliterary and was leaning toward choosing adult literacy. Finally, he said, he would like to see more books in public places, an initiative of former Poet Laureate Joseph Brodsky that has enjoyed much success.

Mr. Hass, like Ms. Dove who served two terms, said that his initial fear when he accepted the post was that it would interfere with his writing life. However, during his trips back and forth from California to Washington and points between, he plans to write every time he is on any form of public transportation.

In closing, Mr. Hass recalled that the first time he came to Washington was to "'levitate' the Pentagon" during a peace rally. "I consider that and this [being Poet Laureate] to be acts of citizenship."

'Jurisprudence, or The Woods in New Jersey'

For Justice William J. Brennan Jr.*

Where there was only grey, and brownish grey,
And greyish brown against the white
Of fallen snow at twilight in the winter woods,

Now an uncanny flame-like thing, black
and sulphur-yellow, as if it were dreamed by Audubon,
Is turned upside down in a delicate cascade

Of new green leaves, feeding on whatever mites
Or small white spiders haunt undersides at stem end.
A magnolia warbler, to give the thing a name.

The other name we give this overmuch of appetite,
And beauty unconscious of itself, is life.
And that that kept the mind becalmed all winter?–

The more austere and abstract rhythm of the trunks,
Vertical music the cold makes visible
That holds the whole thing up and gives it form,

Or strength–call that the law. It's made,
whatever we like to think, more of interests
than of reasons, trees reaching each their own way

for the light, to make a sort of order unawares.
And what of those deer threading through the woods
In a late snowfall and silent as the snow?

They are the mind, I think, in jurisprudence, or in art.
Look: they move among the winter trees, so much
the color of the trees, they hardly seem to move.

**Mr. Hass said he received a call shortly after his appointment in which the caller requested him to write a poem for Justice Brennan's retirement from the Supreme Court in 1990. He replied that he could not write on demand, went to bed, woke up and wrote this poem.*

Arab-American Cultural Relations:
Seminar Looks at Past, Present and Future

Opinions ranging from the lack of critical acceptance for Kahlil Gibran by America's literary establishment to using Arabic in cyberspace were heard at the Library when six prominent scholars of Middle Eastern studies expounded on "Arab and American Cultural Relations: Past, Present and Future" during a seminar on Sept. 29.

The seminar was the last event in the series "Oriens Illustratus: Programs for the Near East Section at Fifty," which marked the 50th anniversary of the establishment of the Near East Section in the Library's African and Middle Eastern Division.

Said Dr. Billington, who opened the seminar: "It is my hope that this seminar will further enrich Middle Eastern studies and will initiate a continuing dialogue between Arab and American intellectuals. We expect to establish, when funding becomes available, a center for the study of Islamic civilization at the Library to further encourage research, discussion and the full use of our collection in this area."

George N. Atiyeh, head of the Near East Section for the past 27 years, told the attendees that the keynote speaker, Edward Said, professor of English and comparative literature at Columbia University, was ill and therefore could not attend.

Ann Kesch, president of the Middle East Studies Association, introduced the first group of panelists. Irfan Shahid, Sultan Qaboos Professor of Arabic studies at Georgetown University, spoke on "Gibran in the Anglo-Saxon World: The Problem of *The Prophet*."

He asked, "Who is the best-selling American poet who has outsold all American poets from [Walt] Whitman to [T.S.] Eliot?" And answered: "Kahlil Gibran."

Yusef El-Amin

George Atiyeh (left), head of the Near East Section, welcomes Camille Nowfel, president of the Washington Chapter of the American University of Beirut Alumni Association, to the Library seminar.

According to Mr. Shahid, Kahlil Gibran (1883–1931) is the only Arab or Arab-speaking author who has succeeded in writing a book that has had an important influence worldwide. "Although Gibran was a Lebanese-Syrian, Arab by birth, he spent three-quarters of his short life in America, where he wrote his masterpiece, *The Prophet*," said Mr. Shahid. "The book was written in the language of the country in which he became a naturalized citizen."

According to Gibran's publisher, Alfred A. Knopf, *The Prophet* has sold millions of copies worldwide and the book's success was entirely due to its own appeal, since it was never promoted. The book has been translated into all the major languages "and some of the minor languages," said Mr. Shahid.

Despite his global success as a poet and literary author, Kahlil Gibran has been snubbed by America's academics. "The Ivy League universities do not treat him as an American author, let alone as a classic writer," said Mr. Shahid. "The removal of Gibran from the mainstream of American literature is reflected also in his noninclusion, or perhaps exclusion, from the *Dictionary of American Biography, The Biographical Dictionary of Contemporary Poets, Who's Who of American Poets* and the *Encyclopedia of American Biography*."

In closing, Mr. Shahid said that "if American literary critics would approach Gibran's works with an open mind, then they would realize that the real Gibran is one of the true literary voices of the 20th century who represents the evolution of the Arab-American community in these United States."

Roger Allen from the University of Pennsylvania spoke on "Arabic Literature in America: Issues of Translation and Reception." He said that for many translators of Arabic texts, their work has changed from part-time to full-time because of

America's increasing interest in Middle Eastern literature.

The professor then provided a look at what it takes to get a translated book on a bookstore's shelf. "There are a host of decisions to be made once a publisher agrees to publish a translated book, including choice of cover, binding and title," said Mr. Allen. "These choices [affect] what the American reader chooses to buy, and also reflect on the status of work and of the author in his homeland. What does or does not emerge from the translation is important and can cause problems such as changing the nature of the work and its understanding in the English version."

"The next area where translation will be important is in the secondary schools," said Mr. Allen. "This is how Middle Eastern studies will survive at the university level. The only way we are going to have an impact on American society is to continue to move out of the academic area into the general area," he said.

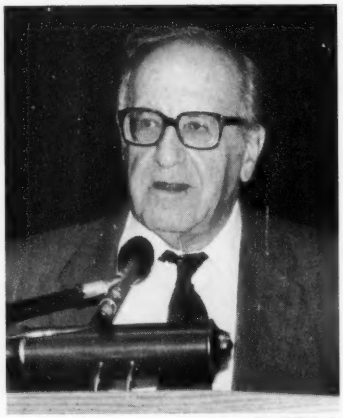
Jewett Professor of Arab Studies, Muhsin Mahdi from Harvard University, examined "Near Eastern Studies: Some Future Directions."

"The problem with Near Eastern studies, he said, is: To what extent can one become acquainted with broad cultural questions . . . without subsequently learning nothing about everything?" He suggested that students focus on a single area of Arab and Islamic studies.

After lunch, Halim Barakat from Georgetown University, spoke on "Exile and Creativity: The Case of the Arab American (Mahjari) Writers."

Mr. Barakat has studied extensively the interrelationship between creativity and exile.

"Through my search I began to correlate some general observations about the conditions [that influence] creativity in Arabic literature such as severity of exile, encounters between civilizations and the distance from centers of political, social and cultural authorities," said Mr. Barakat.



Yusef El-Amin

Irfan Shahid of Georgetown University was among the speakers.

The breakthrough for the Arab American (Mahjari) writers came in 1921, when Kahlil Gibran, Mikhail Naimy and others founded Ar-Rabithah, a writers organization dedicated to promoting Arabic language and its literature.

"These writers constituted the first wave of literary [output] in the contemporary Arab World," said Mr. Barakat. "In exile these artists created their best and greatest works."

Evelyn Early from the U.S. Information Agency discussed her experiences as Fulbright scholar at the American University of Beirut in her lecture "American Education in the Arab Countries: From Alif to Yā' into Cyberspace." "I have spent 14 years of my life in the Middle East," said Ms. Early. "You cannot discuss culture without discussing politics. . . . Cyberspace might be the transcultural phenomenon" to bridge the gap between Arab and American relations.

She suggests that even in cyberspace, with its listservs and electronic bulletin boards, that information will still need interpreters. "In the new world of information assimilation, we will be faced with technologies which offer, perhaps, a level playing field in which Arab and American cultures can continue a cultural dialogue," Ms. Early said.

In the last lecture, Sadeq al-Azm, chairman of the department of philosophy at Damascus University, spoke on "Islam and Secular Humanism: The Implications for America."

"In the past five or six years, during my travels in Europe and in the United States as an Arab lecturer, a series of questions kept cropping up in lectures, and in private conversations with university colleagues, journalists and students," said Mr. al-Azm. "Are Islam and modernity or Islam and secularism or Islam and democracy or Islam and free speech or Islam and religious tolerance compatible?"

According to Mr. al-Azm, in the last quarter of the 19th century a liberal reform movement in religious interpretation was established. Anyone taking cues from this movement, according to the speaker, would not have any problem answering yes to these questions. "On the other hand," he said, "there are [members] of the Islamic movement that believe that secularism and democracy are absolutely incompatible and inconceivable in Islam."

Following the seminar guests attended a reception in the Montpelier Room hosted by Saudi ARAMCO, Mobil Corp. and the National U.S.-Arab Chamber of Commerce. Dr. Atiyeh received an award for his service in the Near East Section from Camille Nowfel, president of the Washington Chapter of the American University of Beirut Alumni Association.

The guests also viewed the exhibit "Hearts and Minds Without Boundaries: The Middle East Experience," which was curated by Christopher Murphy, Turkish area specialist in the Near East Section. The exhibit can be seen in the Mumford Foyer of the Madison Building until Dec. 15.

—*Carroll L. Johnson*

Carroll Johnson is a communications specialist in Cultural Affairs.

News from the Center for the Book:
Book in the Islamic World *Is Published*

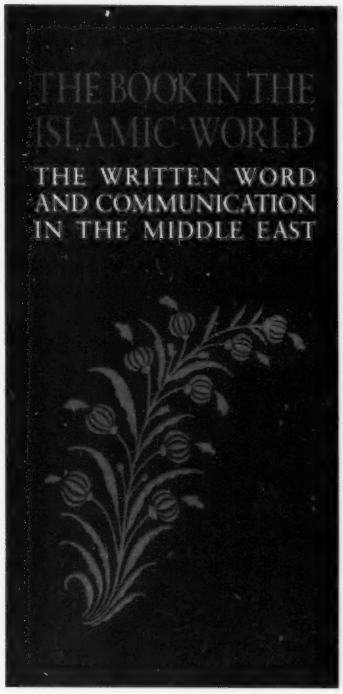
The State University of New York (SUNY) Press, in cooperation with the Library of Congress, has published a pioneering scholarly work about the history of books in the development of cultures in the Middle East.

Based on papers presented on Nov. 8–9, 1990, at an international conference sponsored by the Center for the Book and the Library's Near East Section, *The Book in the Islamic World: The Written Word and Communication in the Middle East* is edited by George N. Atiyeh, head of the Near East Section. The 13 papers examine the "book" not as an artifact, but in terms of its intellectual and social influence in the Islamic world.

The contributors and their topics include: Muhsin Mahdi (Harvard University), "From the Manuscript Age to the Age of Printed Books"; "The Koranic Text," by the late Jacques Berque (College of France); Franz Rosenthal (Yale University), on the classical Muslim view of the abundance of books; Seyyed Hossein Nasr (George Washington University), on oral transmission and the book in Islamic education; Annemarie Schimmell (Harvard University), on "The Book of Life Metaphors Connected with the Book in Islamic Literatures;" and Wadad al-Qadi (University of Chicago), on the inner structure and cultural significance of biographical dictionaries.

Michael W. Albin, chief of LC's Order Division, contributed a selective bibliography about the book in the Islamic world. An appendix includes three important Ottoman documents relating to the history of books and printing, translated by Christopher Murphy of LC's Near East Section.

The Book in the Islamic World, a 305-page volume with 42 black-and-white illustrations, is available for



$59.50 in hard cover and for $19.95 in paperback. It is available in bookstores nationwide and from the SUNY Press at (607) 277–2211.

It also is available in the LC Sales Shop. If ordering by mail, add $5 for postage and handling. Orders should be sent to the Library of Congress Sales Shop, Washington, DC 20540–5240. Credit card orders may be placed by phone at (202) 707–0204.

☐ **LC Book by Claire Badaracco Still Available.** Johns Hopkins University Press has just published *Trading Words: Poetry, Typography, and Illustrated Books in the Modern Literary Economy* by Claire Hoertz Badaracco. The chapter on the R.R. Donnelley Co. is based on a volume written by Ms. Badaracco and published by the Library of Congress in 1992: *American Culture and the Marketplace: R.R. Donnelley's Four American Books Campaign, 1926–1930.* This handsome volume, which contains 31 illustrations, focuses on the publication of Herman Melville's *Moby Dick,* illustrated by Rockwell Kent; the *Tales* of Edgar Allan Poe, illustrated by W.A. Dwiggins; *Walden* by Henry David Thoreau, with illustrations by Rudolph Ruzicka; and Richard Henry Dana's *Two Years Before the Mast,* illustrated by Edward A. Wilson.

The volume is available in the LC Sales Shop and by mail for $15. If ordering by mail, add $5 for postage and handling. Orders should be sent to the Library of Congress Sales Shop, Washington, DC 20540–5240. Credit card orders may be placed by phone at (202) 707–0204.

☐ **LC New Deal Arts Collections Discussed.** Center for the Book

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Illustration from *Four American Books* for *Moby Dick*

Director John Y. Cole was a participant on Aug. 31 in a panel discussion on "The W.P.A. and Federal Project Number One" at the 59th annual meeting of the Society of American Archivists, held in Washington. He presented a brief overview of the Library's New Deal arts collections, emphasizing their history, their rich research potential and the Library's plans—still being developed—to digitize portions of the collections. He also described the Center for the Book's December 1994 New Deal arts symposium (see the LC *Information Bulletin*, Feb. 6, 1995) and a book that will be based on the symposium.

☐ **Photography Book About Readers in Libraries to Be Published.** In cooperation with the Center for the Book and the Library's Publishing Office, in 1996 the University of New Mexico Press will publish a book by photographer Diane Griliches. Tentatively titled *The Drama Within: Libraries and Their Inhabitants*, the volume will include an introduction by Librarian of Congress Emeritus Daniel J. Boorstin.

☐ **Encyclopedia of the Library of Congress Being Prepared.** Dr. Cole is coordinating the preparation of a new one-volume reference work *The Encyclopedia of the Library of Congress*, scheduled for publication in 1997. It is being developed in cooperation with the International Encyclopedia Society, which has sponsored publications such as *The World Encyclopedia of Cities* (ABC Clio: 1993) and the forthcoming *Encyclopedia of Publishing and the Book Arts*. The LC encyclopedia will include approximately 12 overview articles and 125 shorter entries arranged alphabetically. It will include photographs, charts and appendices on historical topics.

☐ **LC History Spotlight: "The First United Nations Library."** The Library of Congress's contribution to the founding of the United Nations has been largely overlooked in the celebrations of the U.N.'s 50th anniversary. In one of its earliest "extension of services to new areas," the Library organized and staffed the 3,000-volume library used by delegates to the United Nations Conference on International Organization, held in San Francisco April 25–June 26, 1945. Close cooperation and the loan of approximately 2,000 volumes and other materials came from the State Department and California libraries, including Mills College, the San Francisco Public Library, Stanford University, the University of California and the Los Angeles Public Library.

More than 1,000 volumes were sent to the conference library from LC's shelves; the 1945 LC *Annual Report* proudly notes that, in the entire endeavor, "not a volume was lost." Verner W. Clapp, then director of LC's Acquisitions Department, was "conference librarian." He was assisted, among others, by Lewis Hanke, director of the Hispanic Foundation, and U.S. Navy Yeoman 3rd Class Jerrold Orne, Instructor, Naval Training Center, San Diego, and Fellow in Library Science at the Library of Congress.

Moreover, the Library placed collections of about 200 volumes on each of the special cross-country trains that brought delegates to San Francisco. Writing in the May 26, 1945, issue of *The Saturday Review of Literature*, Richard L. Neuberger described these collections, which included "WPA Guides for every state on the itinerary" and "books varying from *Cartoon Cavalcade* to Beard's *A Basic History of the United States*.

Tennis Tips

CBS Television sportscaster Mary Carillo reached millions of viewers on Sept. 3 with a 30-second Center for the Book "Read More About It" message during the U.S. Open Tennis Championships.

Librarian Honors Former Register of Copyrights:
Barbara Ringer Receives Distinguished Service Award

Librarian of Congress James H. Billington honored former Register of Copyrights Barbara Ringer and 20 members of the Advisory Committee on Copyright Registration and Deposit, known as ACCORD, at a gala luncheon in the Thomas Jefferson Building of the Library of Congress on Sept. 29.

Barbara Ringer received the Library's Distinguished Service Award for her lifetime contributions to the field of copyright, both nationally and internationally, and for her contributions to the Library of Congress over a period of 40 years.

Ms. Ringer joined the staff of the Copyright Office in 1949 and served as Register of Copyrights from 1973 to 1980. She played a critical role in the 20-year program leading to the revision of the U.S. copyright law in 1976 as well as its implementation.

In addition, she was instrumental in the establishment of the Rome Convention of 1961, an international treaty for the protection of performers, broadcasters and record producers, and the 1971 revisions of the Berne Convention and the Universal Copyright Convention.

In 1993 Ms. Ringer returned to the Library to co-chair and administer the Librarian's ACCORD committee and was the major drafter of the committee's final report. She served as acting Register of Copyrights from December 1993 to August 1994 during a difficult time. Throughout her distinguished career, Ms. Ringer has been known for her brilliance as a drafter of legislation, her authorship of works on copyright and her ability to harmonize divergent points of view.

Ms. Ringer's fellow members of ACCORD, a distinguished group of lawyers, scholars, publishers, authors and administrators, were also honored for their service advising the Library and Copyright Office on improvements to the registration and deposit system in light of the proposed Copyright Reform Act of 1993.

The group was given the task of assuring that creators and copyright owners were protected by law while also ensuring that the works resulting from their labors were acquired and preserved by the Library. Their report contained a number of helpful suggestions to make the registration and deposit systems stronger to the benefit of both the creative community as well as the American public.

Library Publishes *Classification R: Medicine*

Library of Congress Classification R: Medicine, 1995 Edition has just been published by the Library of Congress's Cataloging Distribution Service. It is the first new edition of this schedule in nine years, replacing the 1986 fifth edition. *Class Schedule R* includes classification data created through early 1995 and has new class numbers and captions for such topics as DNA fingerprints, exercise addiction and Lyme disease.

LC Classification Schedule R: Medicine, 1995 Edition is the second schedule produced using the new automated Library of Congress system. The Library is now converting all class schedules into the USMARC format, which will result in more frequent updating and revisions and quicker publication of new editions.

The new publication is smaller and less bulky than before. It is now a handy 7¼ by 10¼ inches and is printed on both sides of the page. Thumb tabs throughout the tables and indexes make content location easier. A new cover design and colors, more readable typeface and the new size help users quickly differentiate the new LC schedules from the old. *LC Classification Schedule R: Medicine, 1995 Edition* costs $34 in North America and $35 outside North America. Order it directly from: Library of Congress, Cataloging Distribution Service, P.O. Box 75640, Washington, DC 20013-5640; telephone: (800) 255-3666 (toll-free in U.S.) or (202) 707-6100 elsewhere; fax: (202) 707-1334.

Related Library publications, also available from the Cataloging Distribution Service, include: *LC Classification—Additions and Changes* (1995 subscription: $100 North America/$110 outside); *LC Classification Schedules Package* (all schedules, A-Z) for $666 in North America/$700 outside—price subject to changes as new editions are published; *Subject Cataloging Manual: Classification, 1st Ed.* ($27 in North America/$29 outside); *Update No. 1 (1995) to the Subject Cataloging Manual: Classification* ($23 in North America/$24 outside); and *Subject Cataloging Manual: Shelflisting, 2nd Ed.* ($37 in North America/$39 outside).

Coming in 1996: *Classification Plus*—a full-text, Windows-based CD-ROM that will include the *LC Classification Schedules* and *Library of Congress Subject Headings*. Contact the Cataloging Distribution Service for details.

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